

## Shirley's Port Beer



On the 25 October 2012 at the National Co-operative Conference Gala Dinner at Port Macquarie, New South Wales, Chairperson Shirley Faram was presented an award by celebrity Chef Maggie Beer—a Highly Commended Certificate 2012 in recognition of her dedication to the co-operative model applying to affordable housing in Victoria. The award is also an honour for SouthEast and co-operative housing.



## AGM 2012—25 YEARS



SouthEast director Debbie Dioguardi presented the 25 Year Membership Plaques at the AGM.



"I thank the co-op for 26 years of affordable housing," said recipient Margret Stephenson.



"I didn't think I'd last 25 years," said Shirley Faram.



## AGM—PIX



Chairperson Shirley Faram welcomes members to the AGM.



Members voting in the Chairperson ballot



Returning Officer David Griffiths seemed confused when announcing the Chairperson vote.



Members at the AGM

# MEMBERS FIRST—LINES OF COMMUNICATION



## Greg Nolan

Just recently, I submitted an 850 word article titled “Members First, Past Present and Future” which has been published in Co-operators and which all members will receive a copy hopefully.

In summary, I gave a brief personal history of my life as a Co-op member, and referred to some of the political squabbles and debates with econocrats, and officials of Govt. over the years, and also just generally about the ‘community’ atmosphere of those earlier days. There are discussion

points in the article about the concepts of accountability and transparency, and also the importance of open communication and consultation with members, before decisions are passed down as a ‘fait accompli.’

This aspect of good clear lines of communication, is a vital part of how Co-ops should function, ideally. However, there is a continual need to work on improving all aspects of timely information flow, from bureaucratic to Board level and so on down to members.

I attended the National Housing Co-ops’ Conference at Zinc in Federation Square in March 2012, and one of the speakers was Rob Wardell, General Manager of United Housing Ltd, an organisation resulting from a merger between the former Footscray and Essendon RHC’s. What he had to say mirrored remarkably some of the problems that have existed in our Southeast Co-op over recent years, re a ‘disconnect’ or a lack (or loss) of empowerment for members. He spoke about the clear need to give back some control to members, which would allow them (us) to feel more involved, or at least more able to ‘buy in’ to many of the important decisions made by the Co-op board.

I submitted a nomination to be a board member and as from the 2012 AGM I am now a director. It will always be my intention to try and bring important news to the attention of members, whenever possible, and I would hope that the word ‘confidentiality’ would never be used as a way to deprive members of information that they ought to know, before policies and draft plans become fact, “after the fact.” In other words, more openness and transparency, rather than secrecy or lack of scrutiny by the members, is what I believe should be the basis of “clear lines of communication.”

**Contributions:** SouthEast welcomes member contributions to the newsletter. Interested members should contact the General Manager Ian McLaren - 9706 8005.

# Staff

## Member takes a Jump

Why did SouthEast staffer Dale Carroll jump from an aeroplane? Was it a test ordered by the General Manager Ian McLaren?

This is Dale's explanation:

Every year the Upper Yarra Secondary College has to raise money to pay for its school chaplain and wellbeing team. This year I put my hand up to skydive in tandem from Lilydale Airport on the 20<sup>th</sup> October and I asked friends and family to sponsor me. I paid \$350 for the jump. My church at Yarra Junction gave \$500 and altogether \$1257 was raised for the UYSC Chaplaincy. This means the kids at UYSC will continue to get the care and support they deserve and need.

Daily people would ask me are you scared and I would say no. But things changed when it was time to jump. All I could hear in my head was the voice of someone saying why would anyone want to jump out of a perfectly good aeroplane?

I free fell 9000 feet and the parachute opened at 5000 feet. Sam, my skydiver let me guide the chute in 360's and when we landed there was a great warm welcome from all my mates waiting on the ground. I was extremely excited and looked like a modern day Hobbit as I kissed the ground and made my way back to my earthly reality.

Would I do it again they asked. Well I am officially a qualified student skydiver and have a license to prove it. You never know it could become a new venture despite the risks involved you see I actually felt at home in the sky and that's dangerous to a risk taker like me.

Gives new meaning when asked at the checkout any fly buys sir? It's all I can do to stop myself from passing on the whole story all over again.



## Board Skills Audit



Chris Cooper, UK Co-operative College

Over the last 20 years a series of national and international reports on corporate governance have been very clear in their recommendations for improving board performance, the performance of individual directors, governance and appraisal.

*"The Board should undertake a formal and rigorous annual evaluation of its own performance and that of its committees and individual directors. The Board should have in place an effective means of appraising its own performance and that of its individual directors."* **The UK Co-operative Movement Corporate Code of Governance**

"Boards continually need to monitor and improve their performance. This can be achieved through board evaluation, which provides a powerful and valuable feedback mechanism for improving board effectiveness, maximising strengths and highlighting areas for further development. The evaluation process should aim to be objective and rigorous." **The UK Financial Reporting Council 2011**

Moreover, many codes recommend, that as part of the openness and transparency of the governance of an organisation, that Boards should report annually, to their membership, on how that performance appraisal process has been conducted.

While there is, inevitably, some understandable apprehension among participants about any appraisal process, it is worth pointing out that **this process is intended primarily as a developmental tool** to enable Boards to:

- ☐ Understand their relative performance strengths and weaknesses as a Board
- ☐ Be clear about what will be required to enhance their strengths and minimise their weaknesses
- ☐ Produce relevant Board development plans
- ☐ Undertake related development activity

South East Housing Co-operative Limited has highlighted the following objectives:

- ☐ To provide a 360 Degree Board Skills Audit to identify training and development needs of existing Board members to ensure the effective delivery of the business objectives.
- ☐ To assess the current performance of the Board and identify ways for improvement.
- ☐ To assess the current performance of individual directors

The process for the 360 Degree Board Skills Audit was as follows:

- ☐ Provision of a guide, supporting and advising to directors to enable the completion of questionnaires on line between 10-18 October 2012:
- ☐ Self-assessment of knowledge and skills - completed by all Board members with regard to themselves
- ☐ Peer assessment of knowledge and skills - completed by all Board members with regard to all the other Directors on the Board
- ☐ Assessment of knowledge and skills of the board which asks directors to give their views on the performance of the Board in a range of important areas.

Auditor, Chris Cooper observed a Board meeting on 2nd November 2012 and provided feedback to the Board and individual directors on the 9 November 2012



# AGM PROCESS & OUTCOMES

The SouthEast AGM was held on the 19th November 2012 at the Dandenong Club with 52 members present - an increase on the 40 members attending the general meeting on the 27 February 2012 and the 43 members who attended the last AGM on 21 November 2011

The Annual Report was presented to members by director Andrea Lee and General Manager Ian McLaren and accepted by members and in the meeting evaluation survey 19 members (48.717%) rated the Annual Report as Excellent, 11 (28.205%) Very Good and 7 (17.948%) as Good.

The Returning Officer, David Griffiths, advised that Greg Nolan had been elected to the board for a three year term. The Returning Officer called for nominations for Chairperson and there were two nominations - Shirley Faram and Andrea Lee. After a secret ballot, Shirley Faram was elected. The Returning Officer called for nominations for the position of Secretary and Andrea Lee was nominated and elected.

25 year Membership Plaques were announced for eight members with only two able to attend the meeting - Margret Stephenson and Shirley Faram. The plaques were presented by director Debbie Dioguardi. The other recipients were Nessa Magee, Jenny Wildes, Lorna Wallace, John Mathews, Kerry Kasperz and Diane Ward.

The Co-operators book was also launched at the meeting.

New board member Greg Nolan presented a report on the Communications Working Group.

A Rule change was also accepted by members - limiting the term of office of the Chairperson.

Thirty nine (75%) of members present provided the following overall ratings for the meeting - Very Helpful 20 (51.282%), Helpful 9 (23.07%) and Adequate 9 (23.07%).

# Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade



KELLOGG COLLEGE





# Co-operative Decade

ICA unveils plan to guide co-ops into their strongest growth phase

*Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade launched at Co-operatives United*

Manchester, United Kingdom. 31 October, 2012; The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) today outlined an ambitious strategy to make co-operatives the fastest growing business model by the end of the decade.

“We want to see co-operatives rise to the top of global business as the fastest growing business model by 2020,” said Charles Gould, Director-General of the ICA. “Actors on the global economic stage are seeking answers to pressing financial and social problems and this model provides many of the solutions they seek.”

The co-operative decade strategy not only aims to make co-operatives the fastest growing form of business but also seeks to make co-operatives the acknowledged leader in environmental, social and economic sustainability.

President of the ICA, Dame Pauline Green, said today was a pivotal moment in the history of the co-operative sector. “This international year has seen the global co-operative movement come together in a way which was previously unimaginable. Now our challenge is to build on this hard work in a way which garners results. We now are in a position to cement our business model in markets worldwide.”

The blueprint aims to take co-operatives to a position of being the preferred model by people worldwide.

Dame Pauline and Mr Gould called upon all sectors and members of the co-operative movement to not only rally behind the co-operative decade but to pick up the strategy and develop its own campaigns to further that strategy.

“This is an ambitious plan which will only work with the collaboration and support of the entire, global co-operative movement,” said Dame Pauline, who was a member of the Planning World Group which advised on the drawing up of the blueprint.

## A Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade in Australia?

According to David Griffiths, Secretary of Co-operatives Australia and Co-operatives Victoria: “The challenge for Australia’s co-operatives and co-operators is to develop a blueprint for a co-operative decade in Australia.”

<http://www.australia.coop> <http://www.victoria.coop>

<http://education.victoria.coop>

# National Housing Co-op Conference



The National Housing Co-operative Conference was on the 8 March 2012. It was organised by Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL) with sponsorship by bankmecu and SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd. There is no record of the conference - until now. All should be pleased that SouthEast member Greg Nolan took a record of the proceedings and the introductory paragraphs are published below.

The conference began with a Welcome to Country by Vicki Wilchison-Brown, a Wurrundjerri elder, and some opening remarks by host Roland Northvale, from CEHL who declared that Co-ops were... 'a good way to do business, and a business-like way to do good.' Then followed the first speaker, Karen Walker of Earth CERC (Common Equity Rental Co-op), who expanded on the main theme of the conference 'Housing is just the beginning.'

Following this was the featured guest speaker, Mervyn Wilson, the Principal of the Cooperative College UK, who has worked with Co-ops and Co-op Colleges worldwide, on member education, cooperative identity and governance. His theme was 'Moment of Opportunity', which expanded on investor-owned or member-owned models of enterprise. The basis of his speech was that cooperation is a 'genetic force for human development', and that we all should be questioning the current norm that economic rationalism is the ruling ethos in how to do business, and that 'co-operation' is archaic and inefficient. This is what the peddlers of finance on Wall St. etc, want us all to believe and accept, but we know there are better and necessary endeavours constructed around community and cooperative principles, that can result in longer term, more widely spread benefits from financial and business enterprise.

For Greg's full report go to [sehc.org](http://sehc.org):

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/news/cooperation/542-nhccbeginning>

## Jim Says



Jim Kokoras, Property Officer

## The Four Steps

Jim offers advice on maintenance:

1. Maintenance requests to be submitted in writing unless urgent.
2. Jim arranges for a tradie to contact the member to agree on a date and time for a visit.
3. If the work done is satisfactory, then, ok but if not satisfactory feedback on the experience would be appreciated.
4. If members are uncomfortable at any time with any tradies contact the South East Office.

# Co-operators

Co-operators was published by the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd in October 2012. Copies were distributed to all participants at the Australian National Co-operative Conference, 24-25 October 2012.

Co-operators is what it is – a collection of contributions by members and staff writing about their experiences of co-operation and co-operatives. Without co-operators there are no co-operatives. Co-operatives are a viable successful alternative to public and private enterprise - throughout the world there nearly one billion member-owners of 1.4 million co-operatives employing 100 million people. Most of the contributors are involved with housing co-operatives – the biggest grouping of co-operatives in the Australian state of Victoria with 120 co-operatives and over 6000 members. The contributors share a passionate commitment to the values and philosophy of co-operation. The basis for this passion lies in member user ownership and control of co-operatives. Read the passion about the co-operative way – and think about your own dreams and ask yourself: why not?

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/publications/cooperators>



## ATTITUDE OF A GOOD DIRECTOR

**LOYALTY:** The future of the Co-operative Movement depends to a large extent on the amount of loyalty it can promote in its members. This loyalty must of course commence at director level. It can be shown in two ways.

Firstly by public support. Our Movement grows not by expensive advertising but by word of mouth recommendation. A director has the responsibility of assisting this growth and can do so by making his activities known whenever possible. The director has a story to tell which will interest his fellow parishioners, his work mates, the members of his club. It is a story worth telling and one which can inspire actions in others.

The second show of loyalty by a director can be in his personal support of the society's business. Recently a director was heard to say that he did not use his own society because the treasurer had enough work to do already. Surely he should have been looking for ways of assisting the treasurer rather than reducing the turnover of the society. Growth is essential to our well being and unless a society can look for practical support from its directors, then it can hardly object when members follow the directors' lead.

**STEWARDSHIP:** As a director becomes experienced it is very easy for him to adopt a paternalistic attitude towards the members. A belief that he knows what they really need because they don't.

It is important, therefore, that he be reminded constantly that he is elected to represent members,

## EDUCATION FORUM

not to control them. He must carry out what he believes to be the wishes of the majority even though he may personally regard this as not in the best interest of the society.

There is no place on a co-operative board for a person interested in advancing the cause of a faction or an individual, whether that individual be a director, an officer or a member.

**OPEN MINDEDNESS:** One of the most difficult things for a director is to prevent himself from becoming narrow minded in his attitude to his society.

This may take one of many forms:—

There is the director of a credit society, six or seven years old, who wants to apply the same terms of lending that applied in the first 12 months of operation.

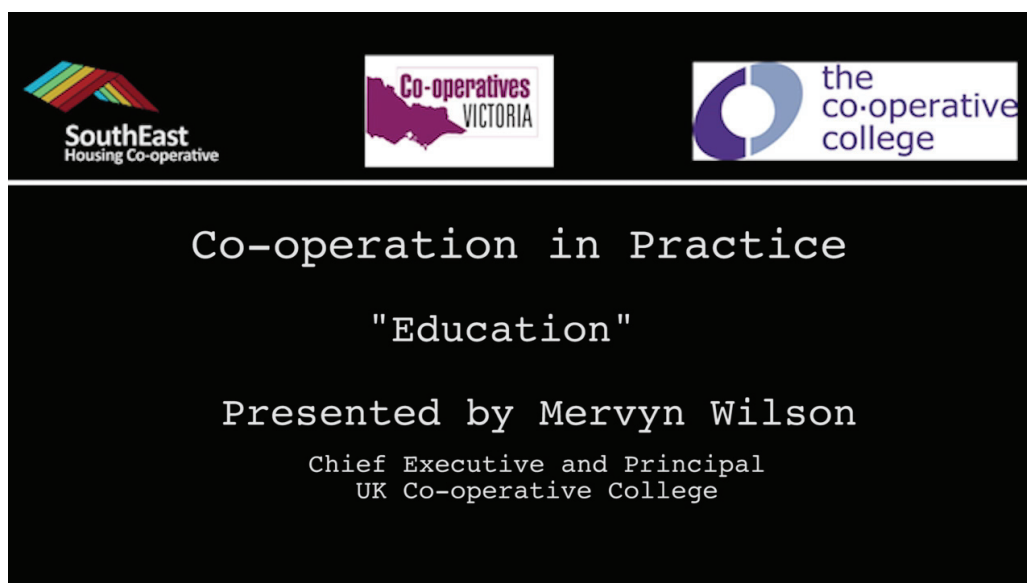
—The treasurer who resents the suggestion that someone has found a better system of recording than he uses.

—The office bearer who cannot contemplate the possibility of his society ever having a membership of more than one hundred or a capital of more than a few thousand pounds.

Many of our directors have a limited range of vision when looking towards the future. Full time operation of credit societies is something that they cannot grasp.

If this attitude is not changed, our Co-operative Movement will stagnate. We need men of vision who are prepared always to look at new ideas and men of courage who are prepared to put these ideas into practice.





With Co-operatives Victoria and the UK Co-operative College, SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd has produced eight films on Co-operation in Practice presented by Mervyn Wilson, the Chief Executive and Principal of the UK Co-operative College—Directors, Education, Governance, International, Members, Principles, Social Enterprise and Values.

## Joy Says



Joy Haines, Tenancy Officer

## Xmas Arrears

Joy wants to remind members that it is necessary to pay rent on time at Xmas—even though the SouthEast Office is closed over the Xmas/New Year period.

In the past, Joy says that some members have not paid their rent at Xmas and have subsequently found it difficult to catch-up their rental arrears.

“Xmas can be an expensive time and when you have to pay your Xmas bills and your rent it can be a challenge.”

Joy wants to remind all members who get into arrears to contact the SouthEast Office to work out what can be done—sooner rather than later.

Visit the SouthEast website for information on:

Maintenance Services—<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/maintenance>

Tenancy Services—<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/tenancy>

Services Charter—<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/services-charter>

# ANNUAL REPORT

Director Andrea Lee, who was appointed Secretary at the AGM on the 19 November 2012, spoke to the board's Annual Report to members.

She said that the report was unique in the level of accountability and transparency—compared with the annual reports of other registered agencies.

She said that, firstly, it included a detailed risk assessment plan. Second, it listed the objectives and indicators from the co-operatives Strategic Plan 2011-13 and reported on progress and, finally, it reported on Key Performance Measures for 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12.



## SOUTHEAST LEADERSHIP

Each year the Housing Registrar provides to each registered association or provider an annual review report. The report goes to the respective boards. SouthEast has published the Housing Registrar's Annual Review February 2012. SouthEast is the first registered association or provider to publish a Housing Registrar Annual Review. The annual review can be accessed at:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/publications/hrar>

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# National Co-operative Conference



Photographic evidence that Chairperson Shirley Faram and General Manager Ian McLaren attended the National Co-operative Conference 24—25 October 2012 at Port Macquarie, New South Wales.

Both Shirley and Ian agree that highlights of the conference included two papers by Chris Cooper of the UK Co-operative College. These are available on the SouthEast web site:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/projects/iy-2012/539-cnnseh> — [Strategy and Governance, the future of co-operatives](#) and [Values as a driver for business success](#).

For reports on the National Co-operative Conference:

## IYC Secretariat

<http://www.iycconference.com.au/>

## Co-operatives Australia

<http://www.australia.coop/ca/index.php/resources/iyenc2012>

Co-operatives Australia also has a list of IYC 2012 Legacy documents:

<http://www.australia.coop/ca/index.php/resources/iyclegacydocuments>



## Management Matters Beyond 2012

Ian McLaren  
General Manager

2012 has been a hectic year. There were numerous events during the International Year of Co-operatives with SouthEast making a substantial contribution. This would not have been possible without the ongoing support of the staff and board.

Management staff and board look forward to further ongoing discussions with the Department of Human Services, in relation to the future of housing policy in the state of Victoria, in which Rental Housing Co-operatives have a crucial and strategic role to play.

I wish all members and their families a merry Xmas and a safe and prosperous new year.



# THE ROCHDALE PIONEERS

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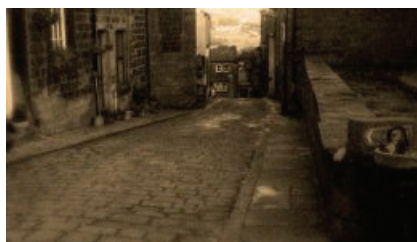
The latest film from the Co-operative British Youth Film Academy tells how the Pioneers' vision for a better social order inspired them to overcome prejudice and adversity to form the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society in 1844.

The film was commissioned by the Co-operative Group and Mark Robinson-Field, the society's National Co-operative and Membership Manager and the film's Executive Producer, told the News: "The original Rochdale Pioneers set out the principles that became the basis for how co-operatives around the world still operate to this day. It is a remarkable story of struggle against adversity that is just as relevant today and we believe that the time is right for this inspirational story to be re-told to a new generation."

The film was co-directed by John Montegrando and Adam Lee Hamilton, who were also responsible for The Co-operative British Youth Film Academy movie Julius Caesar,

The three stills convey the film's atmosphere.

When the film becomes available, SouthEast will organise a premiere for members.



## COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

### Xmas and New Year 2012-13

#### Office Arrangements

Members are reminded the SouthEast Office is closed between COB December 24 2012 and reopening January 14 2013. If there is an emergency, the emergency numbers are on our web site at:

<http://www.sehc.org.au/index.php/services/maintenance/455-eprocedures>

**SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL, MAY YOU STAY  
SAFE AND HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME**

It is called the Communications Working Group but this does not quite work out when the last two of four meetings included one member and two staff. The board established that at least two members should attend a Working Group meeting for it to have a quorum—because it is a member working group.

The Working Group will have to be disbanded unless enough members join and attend Working Group meetings.

The board is calling for nominations from members interested in joining the Communications Working Group. If you are interested, contact the General Manager, Ian McLaren before 10 December 2012. The dates, times and number of meetings are negotiable



## WERE YOU THERE?

**A big American organisation wanted to improve attendance at its annual general meetings. For years the members had shown little enthusiasm. Main interest was in the bets about the chances of having enough people present to run a meeting at all.**

The officers decided to call in the "hidden persuaders", experts who find out the basic psychological reasons why people buy soap, drive cars or go to meetings and then apply subtle pressure to influence them to keep on buying, driving and going.

The psychologists decided to test two different types of Notice of Meeting. One was an emotional appeal to members' sense of duty, loyalty and team spirit. It failed.

The other reminder was more direct and was designed to shatter apathy. It went like this:

"You know where the meeting hall is. In case you don't, here's the address . . . You have the time because all you'll be doing anyway is watching television between eight and ten. The weather will be fine and even if it isn't you don't have to get wet. If you still have an excuse not to come, you're just a louse!"

This blunt approach was much more effective than the appealing letter. (The verdict was not the result of guesswork. It was checked by trained research men who wanted to see if their hunch about a no-nonsense style letter would work out.)

Directors and officers get to their meetings right through the year and willingly give large portions of their time for the members' benefit.

They don't lose heart when the members find it too much of a burden to attend that one vital meeting. They just get a little disappointed and wonder how they can convince members that a co-operative means giving as well as receiving.